

Beaver Hills Initiative



Protected Areas WG:

In January 2009 the Board of Directors of the Beaver Hills Initiative (BHI) gave approval for the Protected Areas Working Group to commence preparing a nomination for the Beaver Hills to be recognized as a Biosphere Reserve under the Man and Biosphere Program of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Two years later, the nomination document is in its final draft form and the process of ensuring support for the nomination by local government, federal and provincial agencies, and NGOs has made substantial progress.

Paralleling the preparation of the technical nomination document has been an extensive communications on the benefits of this designation. Specific presentations were made to the five counties whose jurisdictions include the Beaver Hills (Beaver, Camrose, Lamont, Leduc, and Strathcona), Parks Canada (Elk Island National Park), as well as to senior management within Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. In addition, presentations have been made at local, provincial, and national conferences and meetings that have explained the significance of the Beaver Hills as a candidate area for Biosphere Reserve recognition and the on-going success of the Beaver Hills Initiative.

Over the past two years a number of the BHI Newsletters have contained background information on Biosphere Reserves in general and the Beaver Hills nomination in particular.

For more information on the BHI's biosphere reserve nomination process, please refer to the BHI website or call us to discuss.

Guy S. Swinnerton, PhD
Chair, Protected Areas Working Group

Innovations in:
Data and information sharing
Strategic coordination of planning
Partnership building

NSWA's Integrated Watershed Planning Update:

The North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance [NSWA], based in Edmonton, has reached a major milestone in its planning process under Alberta's Water for Life Strategy by releasing the "Discussion Paper for the Development of an Integrated Watershed Management Plan for the North Saskatchewan River Watershed in Alberta".

It summarizes the planning process's current legislative and policy context, the results of technical studies and conditions across the watershed. The Paper presents draft recommendations in the form of five goals, 20 watershed management directions and 61 specific actions on a wide range of water, land and development issues. The recommendations incorporate stakeholder interests expressed to date, and present an implementation strategy.

The NSWA has embarked on a comprehensive public consultation and stakeholder engagement program to seek input on the draft recommendations. All parties will have an opportunity to share their views and help shape the final recommendations using a survey questionnaire Workbook. The NSWA aims to prepare the final IWMP to submit to Government of Alberta and all stakeholders in late 2011.

Both the Discussion Paper and survey Workbook are available on the website at www.nswa.ab.ca. The survey Workbook can be completed on-line or you can obtain a paper copy by calling 780-442-6363. For more information, please contact Mr. David Trew, Executive Director, NSWA at ph: 780-496-3474 or email: david.trew@edmonton.ca

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Working Together

For a sustainable region,
through shared initiatives
and coordinated action

Spring 2011 Newsletter

Greetings from the Executive Director

Welcome to 2011, another busy year ahead for the BHI. I hope our 12th edition of the BHI Newsletter will give you some highlights of the tasks ahead.

First, and most important, thank you to the BHI partnership and everyone involved for action on the ground, tremendous dedication, hard work, and most of all, remaining committed to the vision of the BHI. A special shout out to the Golden Family, for working with Alberta Fish and Game Association, Alberta Conservation Association, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Edmonton And Area Land Trust Alliance, Nature Conservancy of Canada, and Alberta Recreation, Sports and Wildlife Foundation to secure the habitat lands of the Golden Ranch, a critical habitat link and ranch of historic and cultural value within the Beaver Hills. Your support and cooperative efforts ARE making a difference sustaining this unique landscape and the quality of life it provides.

The BHI is developing their next five year Business Plan. Data Management, Land Management, and Partnership Building will continue to form the three main goals of the Business Plan. The BHI Land Management Framework is also under review. Policy recommendations will be based on science. Current legislation like the Capital Region Plan, Alberta Land Stewardship Act, and the upcoming

North Saskatchewan Regional Plan will be linked. Innovative projects like market-based instruments (Transfer of Development Credits), integrated watershed planning, food systems planning and sustainable tourism, to name a few, will be included.

The updated BHI Land Management Framework will also utilize a Marxan Model as a decision support tool, providing planners and decision makers with the most current conservation planning scenarios. As the BHI website gathers information please visit often to keep up on progress and events.

The Protected Areas Working Group is concluding The Biosphere Reserve nomination, a very exciting time indeed for the BHI. The BHI is fortunate to have a strong partnership with Parks Canada, Elk Island National Park (EINP) and is recognized in their new Parks Management Plan. With Parks Canada experience with Biosphere Reserves, the BHI is understanding the deep level of responsibility that will follow should our nomination be successful.

On behalf of the BHI, thank you and we are looking forward to the next steps.

Brenda Wispinski
Executive Director



www.beaverhills.ab.ca





Cooking Lake

Planners' Working Group:

The BHI Planners Working Group is comprised of planners from each of the five member municipalities as well as representatives from Agriculture Canada, the University of Alberta, and Elk Island National Park. The group has been busy in 2010 with several projects underway.

In May the group was engaged to provide input to the BHI Transfer of Development Credits (TDC) model development project. TDCs are an innovative new tool which provides an alternative to development for landowners wishing to leverage the value of their land. Key input in 2011 will guide both the project and a forthcoming provincial TDC regulation.

Early in 2010 the group contributed to the Tourism Development Opportunity Assessment project being undertaken by Alberta Tourism, Parks, and Recreation. This project will wrap up in early 2011 and has resulted in a detailed inventory of nature-based, agricultural, and heritage tourism activities in and near the Beaver Hills Moraine, a tourism gap analysis, and identification of key opportunities for the future. We hope this project will provide land use policy guidance to member municipalities for future tourism planning.

The primary document of the Planners Working Group is the BHI Land Management Framework. In 2010 the group began organizing a review project of the Framework document. This will involve updating recommendations in the document to reflect new provincial policy, updates to mapping, and reorganization of material to make the document more reader friendly. As well, the Planners Working Group developed a new information tool called the 'Sustainability Checklist' for landowners based on the Land Management Framework recommendations; which is intended to help applicants for subdivision and development prepare more informed and complete applications. Work on the Land Management Framework review will continue through 2011 into 2012.

Tom Schwerdtfeger, Planner, Leduc County
Co-Chair, Planners' WG

Upcoming Events:

Feb 2011

2 - International Year of Forests launch
11-12 - Canadian Birkebeiner Festival
15-17 - AB Soils Workshop at Calgary

March

5 - Dark Sky Party at Elk Island National Park
10-12 - Alberta Parks Forum at Canmore
15-17 - AIA Conference on Wetlands & the Agriculture /Energy Interface at Banff
21 - World Water Day event at Edmonton sponsored by NSWA and NSR River Keepers
22 - World Water Day
21-23 - AAMDC Spring Convention

April

4-6 - Growing Rural Tourism conference at Camrose
4-6 - Water: Our Scarce Resource - CPAA conference at Red Deer
10-12 - Land & Water: Reducing our Impacts conference at Red Deer sponsored by CWRA and ALIDP
12-14 - AB Rural Dev't Network conf at Edmonton
22 - Earth Day

August

12-14 - Bounty in Beaver County

Vision: The Beaver Hills Initiative values the region for its natural beauty, quality of life and supports cooperative efforts to sustain the quality of water, land, air, natural resources, and community development.

BHI Partners:

Local Governments

Beaver County,
Camrose County,
Leduc County,
Lamont County,
Strathcona County

Government of Canada

Elk Island National Park, Parks Canada
AESB, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Government of Alberta

Agriculture and Rural Development
Environment
Municipal Affairs
Sustainable Resource Development
Tourism, Parks and Recreation

Academia

University of Alberta
Alberta Innovates Technology Futures

Industrial Partners

Alberta Industrial Heartland Association
Fort Air Partnership

Non-Government Organizations

Alberta Invasive Plants Council
Alberta Conservation Association
Alberta Fish and Game Association
Alberta Lake Management Society
Alberta Land Trust Alliance
Alberta Sports Recreation & Wildlife Foundation
Beaver Hills Dark Sky Preserve
Cosmic Journey
Ducks Unlimited Canada
Edmonton and Area Land Trust
Land Stewardship Centre of Canada
Miistakis Institute
Nature Conservancy of Canada
North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance
Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
Worley Parsons

Woodlot [Aspen] Management:

Trembling aspen occupies the majority of woodlots in Alberta and it is important for landowners to understand the management and value of this tree species.

Although, aspen produces tremendous numbers of seeds, it regenerates primarily by producing the new shoots or 'suckers' from the root system of the parent tree. Suckering usually occurs after a fire, harvesting and other disturbances. By removing the overstory canopy as much as possible, there is more heat and light available to the forest floor, which will stimulate suckering.

Aspen woodlots are valued not only commercially for manufacture into lumber, pallets, boxes, furniture stock, pulp, paper products and OSB, but are also very important environmentally as a source of food and shelter for many forms of wildlife. Aspen stands, like other forest types, positively affect watershed health, function and water quality, as well as provide settings for outdoor recreation and tourism.

Some of the management recommendations for aspen include:

- Reduce disturbance and injury to the parent root system
- Avoid harvesting in and around sensitive areas
- Winter harvesting reduces risks of compaction, root damage and other negative risks
- Cutblocks should be an irregular shape providing more natural edge which is important for some wildlife species
- After harvesting leave snag and dead trees for wildlife habitat
- Introduce white spruce or other coniferous trees to diversify forest structure as well as age and size structure
- Encourage transition vegetation along the edges
- Through harvesting diversify age structure
- Aspen is highly intolerant of soil compaction, shade, fire and mechanical root damage, and landowners should avoid, minimize or reduce this.

Toso Bozic, Woodlot Specialist
Alberta Agriculture & Rural
Development

